

John Weinzweig. An excerpt from Weinzweig's ballet, *Red Ear of Corn*, had previously been given. It was generally agreed that the Symposium was a landmark in Canadian musical development, and that it created a precedent worthy of emulation by other Canadian cities.

Visitors from Argentina

Cultural links between the Argentine and Europe are less strong than might be wished, and so the recent visit of a pair of gifted duo-pianists, Tila and John Montes, who live in Buenos Aires and have done much to familiarise Latin-American audiences with contemporary music, was of particular interest.

Tanglewood Soloists

At this year's Berkshire Festival Gregor Piatigorsky, Ruth Posselt, Lucas Foss and Luboshutz and Nemenoff, duo pianists, are all participating. There will be nine orchestral concerts, one of which will include the first performance of Nabokov's *La Vita Nuova*. Nabokov, incidentally, was recently in England on a visit.

SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY

Koussevitzky's recent visit to London was welcome for a variety of reasons. The first of these was that we had not heard him conduct here for some fifteen years; another was that we wanted to pay tribute to one of the most important living patrons and benefactors of modern music as well as to a great musician; another was curiosity as to whether time, or America, had left their mark on him; yet another was the chance it afforded to ask him how he found Europe, and the world generally, as far as music was concerned, at the present moment.

Remembering the vital musical life of Paris during the decade following the first world war (the time of the famous "Concerts Koussevitzky" at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées), I asked whether it appeared to him that there was any equivalent centre of gravity for music at the present time. He thought that in the creative sense there was not: there was not, for instance, any group of people working with intentions quite comparable to or as clearly defined as those of *Les Six*; there was not quite the same feeling of intellectual excitement, of creative talents striking sparks off one another, as in those days. He said that, broadly speaking, it seemed to him that in our present post-war period, the emphasis was on interpretation rather than creation. At the same time, he believed that in England there was a number of composers—besides Vaughan Williams and William Walton and Benjamin Britten—who possessed gifts of a high order. He had just been reading the miniature score of Rubbra's Fifth Symphony, and pointed to it by way of evidence.

I asked whether he thought that European composers were liable to suffer as a result of being transplanted to the United States; whether, in fact, there was a fecundity about the soil of Europe, in which civilisation had such deep roots, that America, in which the roots of civilisation were comparatively shallow, still lacked. In individual cases it is true that a composer needs his native soil, he agreed, but not necessarily as a rule. In his view the composer is rather like the scientist, needing little of the apparatus of living in order to perform his task, and able to draw nourishment from a congenial environment anywhere.

Arising out of this, and because of his recent visit to Israel, which I knew had impressed him deeply, I asked him whether he thought that the establishment of an independent Jewish State was likely to set free creative impulses in the arts by which the Jews might enrich the world to an even greater extent than they had as scattered communities, or as individuals participating in the national life of other countries; or could it be that as a nation established in their own territory they might rather turn inwards and grow parochial. This question was obviously out of scale with the occasion, but was one which no reader of Dr. Chaim Weizmann's autobiography could fail to ask. Koussevitzky said he was convinced that the Jewish State was going to make an important positive contribution to the world in one form or another. The standard of intelligence among many of even its humblest citizens was very high, and in addition they were responding to the stimulus of a great endeavour. Their enthusiasm for and appreciation of music was moving in a quite extraordinary way, he had found.

I enquired next what had been Dr. Koussevitzky's impression of European orchestras generally—in so far as he might be disposed to reveal it—and how they compared with American orchestras generally. He had been very pleased with some of the orchestras with which he had played: The London Philharmonic, the Radiodiffusion Française, and the Brussels Orchestra, for instance, were exceedingly good. But many orchestras which *could* be good, suffered under the prevalent system of "guest conductors." If any orchestra were to realise its potentialities, it *must* work consistently over an extended period under the direction of one man. It was because their greater resources and facilities made this possible for them that the best American orchestras were better than the best European orchestras.

Koussevitzky had been reported in the press as lamenting the difficulty of getting audiences to accept new works. He has himself done so much—perhaps more than any other living man—to give practical encouragement to young composers that I asked him whether this was an attitude at which he had arrived by gradual stages, or whether it was a deliberate policy pursued over a long period. He said that it dated from the very start of his career as a conductor. He believed that the acceptance of new music was important, not only for its own sake, but also to prevent the established repertoire from becoming moribund. If people were only prepared to go on listening to the works they had accepted already, the time would come when the meaning of them became lost and they did not want to hear them any more. American concert audiences were as conservative as European ones—except in universities and in a place like Tanglewood, where is gathered youth and a musical *élite* from the wider world.

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I showed Dr. Koussevitzky this account of our conversation to make sure I was not traducing him. Now there remains only to add one thing—without his authority—and for me the most illuminating. He said, I cannot remember exactly apropos of what, that the great joy of his life was that he was always making fresh discoveries about the works he conducted, however often he might have conducted them before, and as he said it his whole face became alight with the eagerness of youth. That, it seemed to me, was the ultimate and quite simple explanation of the wonderful performances to which we had been listening during the previous days.

A.G.